Max Weber Chair Conference 2014:
Women in Leadership: Can Women Have It All?

Professors and the holder of the Max Weber Chair at The Center for European and Mediterranean studies for the past four years, will soon be returning to her home university at Leibniz University Hannover. One of her many contributions to the Center has been organizing the Max Weber Chair Conference each year. While past conferences have focused on European-interest topics like the Eurozone crisis and elections in Germany, this year Lemke chose a broad and inclusive theme: the role of women in leadership.

Touching off of recent debates generated by Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg’s book, Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead, and Princeton Professor Anne Marie Slaughter’s article, “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All,” Lemke brought together women of different disciplines to discuss “Underlying causes and consequences of the uneven share of women’s representation.” The conference, held at NYU’s Deutsches Haus, also addressed issues related to the gender gap, comparative perspectives of women in politics and issues of female empowerment in international organizations.

Brief summaries of each panel follow:

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Keynote Address: Leading From Behind: Moving Towards Collaborative Leadership

NYU: April 3
Kavitha Surana

Lani Guinier, Bennett Boskey Professor of Law at Harvard University, opened the conference with a keynote speech examining different ways of thinking about leadership. She provided a critique of the way power is utilized in the law school context and explained the relationship between competition and leadership in gender relations.

In particular, Guinier cited a study that one of her students had conducted while at the University of Pennsylvania. Though the majority of female students had LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs on par with their male classmates, the study revealed that most women were much more unhappy in the competitive law school environment than men. “The men responded positively, saying that they think they’re very intelligent and like having an opportunity to speak and they like participating in class,” said Guinier. “The women said that they came to help other people and be useful to society. They weren’t there to brag or dominate.”

When Guinier brought her findings to her colleagues, she was surprised at their response. “They told me that we must be admitting the wrong women,” she said. “I thought, ‘this is really going to be a difficult conversation—what’s wrong with the women we’re admitting?’ They didn’t have an answer.”

Guinier argued for a more inclusive projection of leadership. “The issue is not: how can women become more like the men?” she said. “But how can we learn from both the men and the women, ways of cooperative leadership, ways of cooperative intelligence, ways in which we take advantage of our strengths but we also don’t try to overcome our weaknesses by becoming like the other.”

Guinier also pointed out that many studies have shown that women are more suited to collaboration, either through cultural socialization or natural reasons, and said that this approach should be encouraged and integrated into conceptions of leadership, quoting Nelson Mandela’s argument for “leadership from behind.” Though the competitive environment of law school favored men, Guinier said that excelling at competition did not necessarily make a good lawyer. From her many years of experience as a civil rights lawyer, she knew that collaboration with partners and judges was often the key to success in the courtroom.

Thus, Guinier’s key proposal was to move away from a conception of leadership based on competition, towards collaboration. “The way to generate power is not to simply have people competing against each other to figure out who’s the smartest, and give that smartest person an executive position,” she said. “It’s to think: how do we use that person’s smarts in a way that also takes advantage of other peoples’ talents? It may not be the same as the smartest person, but contribute to a group of people solving problems.”

Panel I: Assessing the Gender Gap in Politics and the Public Sphere

NYU: April 4
Stephen Whittaker

Professor Christiane Lemke opened the first panel of the Max Weber Chair Conference with a look back at history. She recalled encountering a “remembrance rally” on the 103rd anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire some weeks ago. The disaster, in which 126 female garment workers died, is often remembered as a turning point that led to stricter labor legislation in New York City. Lemke noted that “women have come a long way in solidifying labor, social and political rights” since that tragic day in 1911.

But, there is always more work to be done. Professors Carol Gilligan of New York University, Kathleen Gerson of New York University and Angelika von Wahl of Lafayette College opened the morning of the conference with rousing calls to action and examples of needed policy changes.
aimed at closing the gender gap in politics and the public sphere.

Gilligan began her talk with the idea that we were in the “midst of a historic transformation” in the drive toward closing the gender gap. She recalled a conference she recently attended at Harvard in which she said she was “accused” of not being a feminist. She defended herself by highlighting her definition of feminism: “freeing democracy from patriarchy.” Women’s voices are essential for breaking out of this patriarchy as they are positioned differently in the gender binary that constructs it, she said. “Women received the vote in 1920,” said Gilligan, but it did not matter until 1980 when second-wave feminism introduced a gender gap in voting practices. By 1996, she said, the female vote was decisive in electing President Clinton. A ten-point gap also divided male and female votes in the 2000 election.

The closer women are to living in a patriarchy, according to Gilligan, “the more likely it is they take on those political affiliations.” Therefore, women must break from inhibiting forms of mutual understanding to further society. In her opinion, the issue with this lies in the “endgame of global patriarchy” in which shaming is essential to protecting ill-conceived definitions of masculinity. This shaming must be recognized and done away with in order to fully appreciate the transformative moment that we are living in, she said.

Kathleen Gerson agreed with Gilligan, but noted that she prefers to take the “social context” approach to matters. “We are on the cusp of a greater socio-economic transformation,” Gerson said. “The essence of work has moved from the local to the global.” New uncertainties in personal and private lives have led to a rise in “optional relationships” and the death of the “gender bargain” that allowed for both family care and steady income Gerson suggested that while “lives are changing, institutions are resistant,” leading to the persistence of a patriarchy in which people are torn between the values of self-reliance and caring for others. Not only is there a gender gap, but a “family gap,” she said, that also results in different electoral outcomes.

Gerson detailed three relationship models she observed trying to fit the contemporary context. First, a “neo-traditional” model in which a committed relationship divides bread-winning and care-giving roles. Second, a “self-reliant” model that places both partners fully on their own in all situations. Third, a “gender flexible” relationship that could emphasize commitment to a partner while blending gender norms and transcending traditional family roles. In surveys, Gerson pointed out, most people wanted a “gender flexible” relationship. However, when asked about the practicability of such a solution, most men opted for a “neo-traditional” arrangement, while women opted for a “self-reliant” model. Therefore, to Gerson, “having it all is an impossible and dangerous frame.” To her, “it is an implicitly selfish dilemma that creates harmful gender bias.”

Angelika von Wahl added a European perspective. She noted that there have been recent challenges to the deeply-entrenched traditional gender model in Europe, notably in Germany. However, the historical labor inequity grossly tips the labor scales in favor of a male-breadwinner model, she said, adding that full-time working women remain small in number in Germany—despite a large number of part-time workers, female employment as a whole remains relatively low. Women in leadership positions tend to follow this trend in Germany according to von Wahl.

She pointed out four major policy reforms in Germany, but was reluctant to call them effective. Real change, she suggested, “could be generated by party collaboration,” but this is not yet a reality.

According to von Wahl, the federal model is a major issue in Germany. This forces the national government to foot the bill for infrastructure and issue payments for child and family care that are components of the strategy to secure a “work-life balance.” She said that veiled political tactics are harming efforts to amend the work-life balance and that much more needs to be done, particularly for the lower classes.

After such an impassioned beginning, fortunately, the later panels followed suit.
Panel II: Women in Politics: Comparative Perspectives

NYU: April 4
Paris Liu

The second panel of this year’s Max Weber Chair Conferences featured a comparative overview of women in politics. Chaired by Erica Edwards, executive director of the Center for European Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the panel comprised Joyce Mushaben, professor of comparative politics at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; Christine Landfried, professor of political science at the University of Hamburg; and Amanda Garrett, lecturer in government at Harvard University and visiting scholar at the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies at NYU.

Mushaben began the panel discussion with a presentation on arguably the most powerful female leader in the world today Angela Merkel, who, although facing crisis at the outset, has successfully regained the support and trust of the German public through her steady handling of the German response to the Fukushima incident and the Euro crisis, Mushaben said.

According to Mushaben, Merkel’s chancellorship “has demonstrated the need for reconceptualization of leadership grounded in the critical ability to listen and to learn and to make changes as opposed to being embarrassed because you are giving up your original stance.”

Landfried discussed the role of women in politics, particularly in terms of parliamentary representation. “Women in politics do make a difference to political culture as well as to political content on the condition that there is a sufficient number of women in politics, not just some outstanding women leaders,” she said.

The numbers themselves are worth considering, said Landfried. Worldwide, 21.8 percent of all parliamentarians are women, while the percentage in Europe overall is somewhat higher, at 35.9 percent. By contrast, the number of women in the U.S. Congress and Senate is 18.8 percent. The numbers are best of all in Sweden and Finland, where the percentage of women in parliament is above 40.

Garrett’s presentation focused on minority women in France, who have done fairly well in attaining high political office. “They have become the face of diversity, Garrett said, but the question remains whether their political roles are substantive or merely a political concession. According to a survey cited by Garrett, “minority women are deemed in French society as more assimilable than minority men, and less culturally threatening.” Therefore, with ever-increasing numbers of minorities in the country, the trick is to capture the votes without alienating those who don’t readily trust minority politicians.

Whether minority women can make a long-term difference remains to be seen, but at the moment the situation is not encouraging, Garrett said. Still, “the fact that they are seen as a gateway to diversity discussions in France is maybe positive for a country that is so notoriously anti-immigrant and anti-minority,” she concluded.

Panel III: The Global Dimensions: Empowerment and International Organizations

NYU: April 4
Caroline Hoffmann

The third panel discussed the global scope of women’s involvement in such varied fields as finance, education, and international organizations. The talk, chaired by Jonathan Bach, Professor of International Affairs at The New School, featured Irene Finel-Honigman, Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, Sylvia Maier, Professor in the Global Affairs Program at New York University, Sabine Lang, Professor of European and International Affairs at the University of Seattle, and Michele Wucker, President of the World Policy Institute.

Professor Finel-Honigman opened the discussion by talking about women in finance.
She attributed the lacking representation of women in the field to psychological and historical incompatibility between women and money, which stems, historically, from sexual control and beliefs that women are more susceptible to sin and emotions. As Lani Guiner before her, Finel-Honigman also talked about the competitive nature of finance as the biggest impediment to women’s advancement, as it takes out the aspect of cooperation.

Professor Sylvia Maier argued that Sheryl Sandberg’s advice to “lean in” could not be extrapolated globally, as eighty-percent of women work in the informal economy. In addition, Maier challenged the prejudice of passive Arab women: she gave examples of Sheikha Al Qasimi, the Minister of Foreign Trade in the United Arab Emirates, Hessa Sultan Al Jaber, who is the first-ever minister of Information and Communication Technology in Qatar, and Shaikha Al Maskari an Emirati geologist who runs Al-Maskari Holding—all powerful businesswomen who challenge this stereotype of passivity and help empower women in the Gulf states.

Transitioning to Europe, Sabine Lang discussed women’s transnational advocacy in the European Union. In her research, she found that alliance-building with regional women’s groups has led to changes in EU policy. Lang explained that empowerment is fragile in the EU, but national women’s NGOs and advocacy groups act as transmitters of the transnational agenda, giving national activists a medium by which they can connect transnationally.

Lastly, Michele Wucker talked about thought leadership and the role of women leaders. In particular, Wucker had interviewed Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, the former president of Latvia, who said that her leadership position was thrust upon her and was not something she actively sought. Wucker mentioned that women often don’t view their strengths as real assets and therefore underestimate their ability to be in a leading role.

This panel exposed the issues women face in leadership and in gaining leadership experience, which are not limited to one country or organization—women throughout history and all over the world struggled with traditional gender roles and society’s perceptions. Most importantly, the panelists mentioned the lack of women leaders and mentors to emulate or to remember from their own careers. This has been an important change—women today see other women leaders and their successes, though there is much room for growth in the scope and importance of women’s leadership.

Does the World Care?

Columbia: April 7
Stephen Whittaker

On April 7, Columbia University presented the annual Blinken Lecture. This year’s lecturer, David Milliband, is a former British Labour Party politician who currently serves as the president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). His talk focused on humanitarian action in the 21st century and whether global interest in humanitarian endeavors is waning.

Milliband opened saying that he wished to address fatalism in the world today and the notion that “no good can come of action.” Milliband recalled that on a recent trip to Lampedusa, Pope Francis offered a speech in which he claimed that he was witnessing the “globalization of indifference,” a condition that Milliband hopes to correct by “rethinking assumptions and renewing the bandwidth in society.”

“In the world today we are seeing the fewest wars ever, but the most refugee crises,” observed Milliband. The IRC has answered this by evolving to not only helping those displaced by international war, but also by the ever-growing levels of civil strife across the planet. Further, Milliband reminded the audience that the image of the “refugee” is often muddled. According to Milliband, the average length of a refugee stay is now twenty years, transforming traditional short-term refugee aid camps into “slum urbanization.”

This massive increase in the average length of refugee stays is blurring the lines
Comparing the New Populist Parties in Europe with the Tea Party in the US

CUNY: April 29
Paris Liu

With populist groups emerging in Western Europe and the Tea Party steaming along in America, the question is whether there are substantial differences in flavor. In a April 29 lecture at CUNY's European Union Studies Center, Jan Willem Duyvendak, professor of sociology at University of Amsterdam, compared and contrasted the new populist groups in Europe and Tea Party in the United States, in both content and political style.

In terms of content, the new populist parties of Western Europe and the Tea Party all tend to define their mission as "the protection of the authentic national culture," Duyvendak said. However, their interpretations of "cultural protectionism" differ from one another. Compared to the more radical and progressive populist parties in Europe, the Tea Party is more of a "conservative form of nativist nationalism," he explained.

In addition, although the European populist parties resemble the Tea Party in that they are both "against the entrenched liberal elite," most Tea Party supporters are staunchly opposed to liberal social values such as abortion and gay marriage, while the European populist parties often support sexual liberty.

Another difference between the populist parties and the Tea Party is their attitudes toward Islam, Duyvendak said. Although both have anti-Islamic sentiments, the European populist parties tend to criticize Islam as a religion and focus on differences in values, while the Tea Party sees Islam as an external threat to the United States due to the terrorist attacks of 2001.

Though the content of the new populist parties in Europe indeed differs from that of the Tea Party on certain major points, they resemble each other quite a lot in terms of political style. For one thing, they are both uncompromising, Duyvendak said. The populist parties in Western Europe do not want to compromise because they think that, "they speak on behalf of the 'authentic' people." Similarly, he said, "the Tea Party has no respect for other people's views and no culture of compromise, based on the belief that they embody the true patriotic, authentic America."

Finally, Duyvendak also pointed out that it is important to rethink the political landscape in the case of Europe. The division of "left-wing" and "right-wing" doesn't help us understand the popularity of the new populist parties all over Europe, he said, and there is actually "a lot of overlap between new populist parties and center parties or even left-wing parties in terms of political platforms."

"It is an easy and lazy way to say that they are just "extremely right-wing or far right-wing parties," Duyvendak concluded.

Restructuring Italy’s Labor Market in the Wake of the Economic Crisis

NYU: May 1
Kavitha Surana

While 2014 has so far pointed to greater economic stability within the Eurozone, the region is still battling sky-high unemployment and slow growth. Italy’s newest prime minister, Matteo Renzi, is expected to implement his Jobs Act this summer and has already decreed a section of it that will give employers greater freedom in hiring and firing short-term workers.

To bring more context to Renzi’s plan and clarify important aspects of Italy’s labor market, Stefano Sacchi, Professor of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Milan, presented the lecture “Berlusconi, Monti,
Renzí: Labor Policy in the Italian Economic Crisis,” at NYU’s Casa Italiana.

Sacchi explained that Italy’s labor market has long been segmented in many ways: between men and women, north and south, and old and young. Sacchi’s research focuses on the labor market segmentation between employees with standard, open-ended contracts, typically at big firms; and employees with non-standard, short-term contracts, typically at smaller firms. The standard-contract workers normally benefit from strong employment protection legislation and greater continuity of benefits, like unemployment insurance and pensions, whereas short-term workers have less protection and less welfare safety-net options. Sacchi called this a position of “flex-insecurity,” unique to the Italian labor market structure. “Because of the way in which the welfare state functions in Italy, it generally gives benefits that are linked to your labor market position,” he said, “Therefore if you are in an inferior labor market position, you will get lower welfare benefits.”

According to Sacchi, Italy is the country in the EU that has made it easier to hire under non-standard contracts the most since the 1990s. Though economists often refer to Italy’s labor market as “rigid,” Sacchi pointed out that, according to the OECD’s measurement of the rigidity of labor markets, Italy’s index is on par with Denmark’s—a country typically seen as “flexible.” As a result, Italy’s share of temporary employment has risen four fold between 1990 and 2012, Sacchi said. This has only increased with the economic crisis. Of employment contracts, signed in 2012, more than 80% were temporary contracts.

Short-term and temporary contracts are not necessarily bad in themselves, but Sacchi’s research found that mainly younger employees were receiving them and that, in most cases, short-term contracts were not a port of entry to reaching a standard-work contract. Instead, most employees continued to receive the same kind of contract they had begun with and as a result received little job training.

Though liberalization of non-standard work contracts is a process that has been at work since the 1990s in Italy, Sacchi focused on the decisions of leaders during the recent crisis and their relationship with the international context. He characterized ex-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s reaction to the employment crisis as “hiding from a storm.” His government following a conservative path, introduced incremental adjustments that only affected non-standard workers, allowing them to shed workers initially despite a non-existent stimulus package.

Partly because of his reluctance to make deeper labor market reforms during an election year, Berlusconi was eventually pushed aside by the European Union and Mario Monti, a technocrat, took his place. Sacchi said that Monti’s role was to play a “signaling game” to international investors and markets. Though Italy never received a formal bailout package from the European Union, Monti’s reforms were instrumental in assuring the ECB that Italy could be trusted. Monti engaged in union-bashing and reformed employment protection laws to allow employees to be fired more easily. In the case of an unlawful dismissal, workers could not longer ask to be reinstated in the company but would only receive monetary compensation through a labor lawsuit.

Sacchi said that Renzi, while acutely aware of the international context, is appealing to his domestic audience, trying to “awaken animal spirits in a depressed economy.” Renzi may be betting that increased optimism in Italy will help to stimulate its market. “He knows that the Italian labor market problem is mostly problem of demand instead of regulatory issues,” Sacchi said. Meanwhile, though Renzi had originally promoted increased unemployment benefits and income maintenance as integral to future labor policies, his first actions in office have been to liberalize the labor market even further without addressing problems of lower training and productivity. Sacchi said that if this is not addressed, there is the potential for a vicious cycle that leads to even lower productivity.

David Forgacs, the Guido and Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimó Chair in Contemporary Italian Studies at NYU, responded to Sacchi’s lecture, attempting to synthesize Sacchi’s economic explanation from his sociological perspective. “It’s very useful to have this historical picture,” he said. “We may all want to talk about what Renzi is doing, but it doesn’t make any sense without knowing what happened in the last years. All the moves Renzi can make are set out by this history since euro crisis began and what happens domestically in Italy is increasingly conditional on these exogenous constraints.”

Forgacs also said he was struck by the diminished power of the unions since the 1970s, when he was living in Italy and the Statuto di Lavoratori had just been introduced. “Collective bargaining and collective presence seemed very strong at that time,” he said. “There’s a radical change now. In the 1970s they had some open antagonism to system and were demanding rights. In the 80s early 90s, it flipped the other way and now no one is confrontational.”
The Academic Elevator Pitch: Three CEMS Students Take on the Threesis Academic Challenge

NYU: April 14
Kavitha Surana

DURING the end of the spring semester at the Center of European and Mediterranean Studies, graduate students can always be found hard at work, preparing to write their theses. This year, three of them chose to present their preliminary work at NYU’s annual Threesis academic challenge.

Many academics get stuck in the arcane language of their research, but Threesis encourages master’s students from all disciplines in GSAS to distill their topic into terms that anyone could understand. The challenge is this: to present the thesis to a panel of judges in less than three minutes and with only one slide, in language accessible to non-experts—in effect, an “elevator pitch” for humanities students.

Caroline Hoffman, who is writing a thesis on perceptions of democracy and stability in Morocco, presented a map of North Africa to demonstrate that Morocco ostensibly looks like a “safe zone” in a region of turmoil. She questioned the outside view that Morocco is “politically stable,” pointing to the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy. “By bolstering Moroccan government as it is now, and with claims of Morocco as a model for Arab countries, we are overlooking the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy. “By bolstering Moroccan government as it is now, and with claims of Morocco as a model for Arab countries, we are overlooking the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy. “By bolstering Moroccan government as it is now, and with claims of Morocco as a model for Arab countries, we are overlooking the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy. By bolstering Moroccan government as it is now, and with claims of Morocco as a model for Arab countries, we are overlooking the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy. By bolstering Moroccan government as it is now, and with claims of Morocco as a model for Arab countries, we are overlooking the autocratic nature of Morocco’s monarchy.

“The obsession of foreign governments with security is diverting attention away from the social unrest in Morocco that could lead to greater conflict in the future.”

Stephen Whittaker’s topic was more historically focused. His thesis examines the emergence of federalism in Europe and tries to untangle the visions of two architects of the current European Union, Jean Monnet and Altiero Spinelli. He opened his presentation harking back to the aftermath of World War II. “In the ashes of the war, there were two questions standing prominently in the mind of a great number of Europeans,” he said. “One, how can they recover from a generation of devastating conflict, and two, how can they make sure that this conflict never, ever, happened again.” He argued that the groundwork of the EU is found in federalism, a response to these questions that emphasized heightened cooperation and communication among Europeans, with the ultimate goal of transcending the traditional structure of national governments.

Hannah Puckett, who is writing her thesis about Muslim identity in Communist Bulgaria, made it to the final round of the competition. She used a picture and the story of two Bulgarians, Baimam and Atidje Getov, to introduce the audience to one of Bulgaria’s minority groups: the Pomaks, Bulgaria-descended Muslims who had converted to Islam during Ottoman rule. Throughout the 1970s Pomaks were targeted by the communist government, forced to change their names and to cease religious customs like wearing the veil. When Pomaks like the Getows resisted, they were brutally repressed.

“I study why terrible things like this happened in Bulgaria’s communist period,” Puckett said. “What did Bulgarians see when they looked at Atidje? What exactly was so threatening about her veil, and how would forcibly removing it from her body make Bulgaria a better nation? My project aims to contribute to a deeper understanding about these tensions.” Puckett also argued that eruptions of ethnic tensions in the Balkans is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. “Nationalist rhetoric would have you believe that the Balkan region has suffered for centuries from ancient ethnic hatred under the Turkish Yoke,” she said. “But this degree of conflict only began to occur with the development of nationalism in the 19th century, when everything associated with the Ottoman past, including Pomaks like Baimam and Atidje, became the enemy.”
Displacement in Post-Yugoslav Literature

NYU: April 9
Hannah Puckett

Professor Tomislav Longinovic of the University of Wisconsin’s Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures spoke on April 9 at the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies’ Eastern Europe Workshop. His talk entitled, “Poetics of Translation: Post-Yugoslav Writers in Search of a Lost Home,” Longinovic focused on how post-Yugoslav writers invoke the theme of displacement in their work.

He categorized three types of displacement. The “adopted homeland,” though a bit oxymoronic, occurs when an actor exists within a liminal space between cultures, for example, moving to another city while still holding onto some of their culture of origin. Assimilation involves a complete renunciation of one’s origins in a new space. Resistance,
sometimes coupled with fundamentalism, involves an obsession with retaining cultural values.

Their stories grapple with how meaning travels across a linguistic and cultural divide, and how to create new, post-conflict cultural space. Thus, Longinovic’s focus is primarily outside the realm of politics. Many authors deal with the issue of language—Serbian and Croatian are similar languages—and yet many insist on translation. For example, the Serbian songwriter Magi wrote about the disappearance of her language. Longinovic explained that in the early 1990s, there was a demand in court for translators, a policy that counter-intuitively used translation as a cultural barrier, rather than a bridge.

The author Aleksandar Hemon also deals with issues of displacement: his anthology of stories, Book of My Lives, highlights the importance of both Chicago and Sarajevo in his life—his two homes. He feels like a foreigner in both places. Hemon also invokes ideas about Yugoslavia, bringing up cross-cultural memories of youth and punk culture. This nostalgia transcends the particularities of being Serbian or Croatian.

Longinovic suggests the possibility of forming a community out of those who have been displaced. This community would not be restricted by ethnicity or national belonging, but would transcend these barriers in a common immigrant experience. These cultural translators would share a common space united by destiny.

Can Europe Be Democratized?

NYU: April 30
Stephen Whittaker

On April 30, New York University hosted Antoine Vauchez of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Vauchez, a noted political sociologist, offered a surprising analysis of how the European Union might be more deeply democratized in the future.

He opened by emphasizing the current “obsession” in the EU with the “question of democracy.” The growing academic subfield of European Studies, he said, has encouraged the study of democracy, particularly because of the public discourse surrounding the democratic deficit often linked to the entrenched institutions of the EU. The “reform paradigm” in the EU utilizes this institutional focus to mainly call for improvements to the European Parliament. According to Vauchez, this because there is a strong desire “to apply known models of democracy to the EU level.”

To Vauchez, the problem with this is that the EU may be “making it by faking it.” When the stress test of the Euro Crisis challenged the institutions of the EU, the Parliament was cast aside in favor of other structures. This was distressing for many, but Vauchez suggested that this is a product of the prevalence of “Europeak” that blurs the lines between “how the EU is and how it hopes to be.” While courts, parliaments and civil society institutions have a certain meaning at the national level, Vauchez was adamant that they must be understood differently at the European level. In essence, this is because Europe is not a nation-state and “Europe’s language must be shaped by a pan-European instrument,” he said.

With this in mind, Vauchez returned to a discussion of the early days of European integration. He noted that the common market is the “starting point” of the Union, and this fact is often forgotten in an effort to focus on the building of a polity. He wishes to return to a focus on the common market in creating a more democratized and efficient Europe.

Vauchez addresses how this might occur through a “tri-institutional approach” with emphasis on European courts, bureaucracy and the European Central Bank. He said that “Europe has been built by these periphery institutions through the common market” and that they form the true core of Europe. If people continue to believe in the “fictions” generated around the more public institutions, no headway can be made towards democratization. He said that we can only truly study Europe “through the mechanisms built by historical necessity and functional need”—in other words, the courts, bureaucracy and the ECB.

The only issue with this approach, he said, is that institutions such as the Parliament are powerful motors for integration. The “European government is very good at building itself,” he said, despite the fact that the EU’s strongest policy areas (economics, agriculture, antitrust law) are managed largely on the perceived periphery. The integration process has been “captured” by the institutions on the forefront, but, to Vauchez, Europe can be democratized by the “reopening of political integration” through the periphery institutions. However, all involved have an interest in keeping them “invisible” and this creates a misplaced democracy.

Vauchez closed with a call to rethink particular pillars of the periphery’s political authority. If the courts, bureaucracy and the ECB can “co-produce a mandate” with other institutions, turn objectivity into an open and contested process, and democratize their make up, they may be able to turn the democratic deficit around.
EUROPE IN APRIL

April 1: NATO decided to suspend all cooperation with Moscow, citing Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the buildup of Russian troops on Ukraine’s border as reasons for the suspension.

April 3: Turkey’s Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Edorgan, announced that the government’s ban on Twitter was lifted after a Turkish court ruled the ban unconstitutional and demanded that access to the site be restored.

April 3: Pope Francis and Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II met for the first time in Rome.

April 3: Amid heightened tensions in Eastern Europe, Russia recalled its ambassador to NATO for consultations.

April 4: A day after Turkey’s ban on Twitter was lifted, a court in Ankara, Turkey’s capital, ruled that the country’s ban on YouTube should also be lifted.

April 6: Pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine stormed a provincial building and raised the Russian flag, demanding the release for riot police accused of killing protesters in Kiev.

April 8: Spain arrested three Spaniards and one Iranian who secretly tried to export to Iran industrial equipment that could be used to make missile parts or enrich uranium.

April 11: Pope Francis apologized for sexual abuse by Catholic clergy for the first time. In March, Francis appointed an eight-member committee to advise the church on how to protect children, punish abusers and train church staff. Advocates for victims of sexual abuse say the church has not done enough to protect children.

April 14: The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss the crisis in Ukraine, at the request of Russia after Ukraine issued a deadline to rebels.

April 15: Silvio Berlusconi, convicted for tax fraud, was sentenced to part-time community service in a home for elderly people for a year.

April 16: About 100 Pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine seized six armored vehicles from the Ukrainian army.

April 18: Nigel Farange, Leader of the UK Independence Party in Britain, rejected offers from the far-right French Front National Leader Marine Le Pen to join in a coalition in the European Parliament. UKIP will instead partner informally with the French Debout la Republique party.

April 25: Five pro-Russian militants were killed by the Ukrainian military during clashes around the southeastern Ukrainian city of Slavyansk.

April 27: Popes John XXIII and John Paul II were canonized by Pope Francis in a ceremony at the Vatican.

April 30: Gerry Adams, president of the Sinn Féin political party in Ireland, was arrested for questioning in Northern Ireland in connection with the abduction and murder of Jean McConville in 1972.

PLEASE NOTE:
There are no event listings for the months of June, July, and August.

EUROPE • NYC will resume publication in September.
EUROPE•NYC Newsletter of the New York Consortium for European Studies

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